

FOSTER CARE FACTS

Nearly One Quarter of Foster Care Children Are Waiting for Adoptive Families

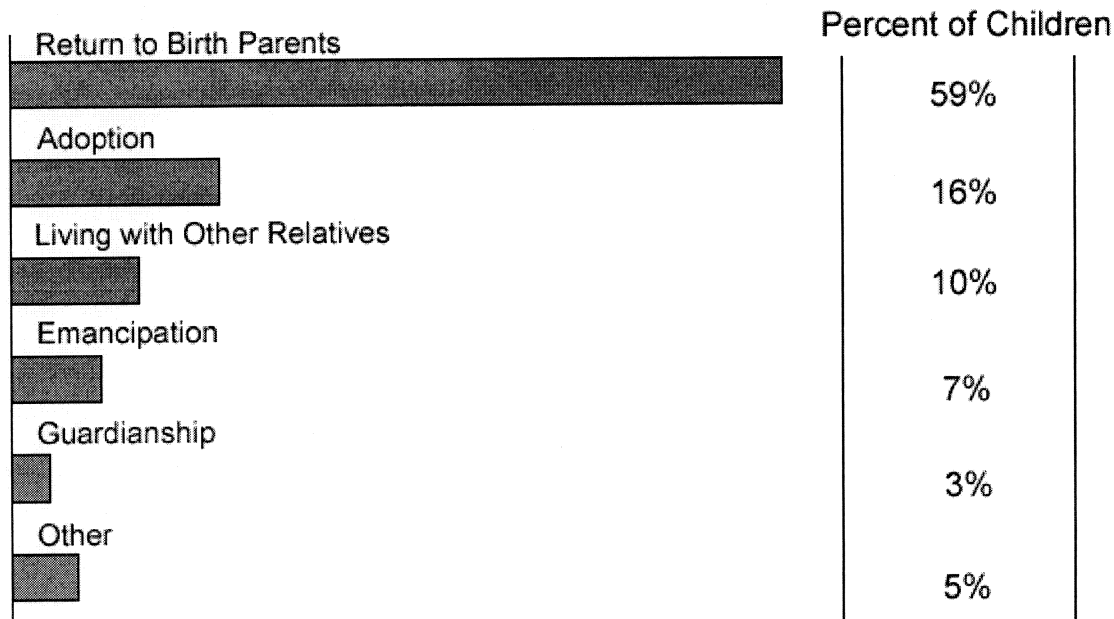
In 1999, the latest year for which totals have been finalized, there were about 581,000 children in foster care in the United States.[1] Twenty-two percent of these children -- about 127,000 kids -- were available for adoption.[2]

Foster Care Population Down From 1999

Preliminary federal estimates indicate the foster care population decreased from 581,000 to 556,000 between 1999 and 2000.[3] The number of children waiting to be adopted, however, increased to about 134,000 during the same period. [4] Early estimates for 2001 show the foster care population marginally increased to 565,000.[5]

The Majority of Children Leaving Foster Care Return to Their Birth Parents

Nearly sixty percent of the 251,000 children who exited foster care in 1999 were reunited with their birth parents. About one fifth were adopted or placed with a permanent guardian. Of those children who were adopted, 64% were adopted by a foster parent and 16% by a relative.[6]



Federal Law Requires States to Place Children for Adoption More Quickly

The 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) mandates that states improve efforts to provide children with permanent families. The Act requires that states ensure foster children have a permanency plan within a year, and termination of parental rights for children who have been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, or whose parents have killed or seriously injured another child in the family. ASFA provides financial incentives for states to increase the number of adoptions from foster care by providing payments of up to \$4,000 per adoption or \$6,000 per special needs adoption when states exceed the previous years' total.[7]

Dramatic Increases in Adoptions From Foster Care

Foster care adoptions increased 78 percent from 1996 to 2000, as a result of ASFA and earlier state initiatives.[8]

It is estimated that ASFA requirements and incentives have resulted in an additional 34,000 adoptions from 1998 to 2000 that would not have otherwise occurred.[9]

| Year | Number of Adoptions |
|---------|---------------------|
| FY 1996 | 28,000 |
| FY 1997 | 31,030 |
| FY 1998 | 36,673 |
| FY 1999 | 46,072 |
| FY 2000 | 50,000 |

35 States and the District of Columbia Record Adoption Increases in 2000

While the number of adoptions in California grew by nearly 2,000, the percentage growth was only 31%, not enough to rank it among the top ten states with the largest growth rates. By contrast, the number of adoptions in Delaware rose by just 67, but translated into a 186% growth rate-the country's highest. Maine totals doubled, and another five states experienced increases of around 50%.[10]

| Top 10 States with Largest Percentage Adoption Increases in 2000 | | | | |
|--|----------|----------------------|----------------|------------|
| State | Baseline | 2000 Adoption Totals | Total Increase | % Increase |
| Delaware | 36 | 103 | 67 | 186% |
| Maine | 203 | 405 | 202 | 100% |
| New Hampshire | 63 | 95 | 32 | 51% |
| Indiana | 774 | 1,143 | 369 | 48% |
| Alaska | 137 | 202 | 65 | 47% |
| Missouri | 817 | 1,205 | 388 | 47% |
| Nebraska | 192 | 282 | 90 | 47% |
| District of Columbia | 166 | 236 | 70 | 42% |
| North Carolina | 907 | 1,244 | 337 | 37% |
| New Mexico | 258 | 346 | 88 | 34% |

States Continue to Increase Foster Care Adoptions

Preliminary 2001 federal estimates indicate states are still increasing adoptions from foster care, spurred by ASFA incentives.[11]

| Top 10 States with Largest Adoption Increases in 2001 | | | | |
|---|-----------|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| State | Baseline* | Estimated 2001 Adoption Totals | Percentage Increase | Total Increase |
| Maryland | 528 | 812 | 54% | 284 |
| Tennessee | 403 | 646 | 60% | 243 |
| Oregon | 831 | 1,069 | 29% | 238 |
| Ohio | 1,777 | 1,958 | 10% | 181 |
| New Jersey | 834 | 1,014 | 22% | 180 |
| Virginia | 321 | 496 | 55% | 175 |
| California | 8,221 | 8,392 | 2% | 171 |
| Kentucky | 384 | 540 | 41% | 156 |
| Michigan | 2,800 | 2,951 | 5% | 151 |
| Maine | 108 | 231 | 114% | 123 |

* [12]

Wyoming and Delaware Triple Adoption Rate

While 26 states doubled (or more than doubled) adoptions from foster care over four years, the goal set by President Clinton in the 2002 Adoption Initiative, Wyoming and Delaware have tripled foster care adoptions.[13]

| States That Have Tripled Adoptions Over Four Years | | | |
|--|----------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| State | Baseline | Estimated 2001 Adoption Totals | Percentage Increase |
| Wyoming | 15 | 50 | 233% |
| Delaware | 39 | 117 | 200% |

Nearly Half of Children Adopted from Foster Care Waited More Than a Year After Termination of Parental Rights

Children in foster care with a case goal of adoption may wait years for adoptive placement. First, courts must terminate the birth parents' parental rights, making the children legally eligible for adoption. Children wait again for an adoptive placement (unless they are adopted by their foster parents or a relative). Finally, they wait for the legal adoption process to be completed.

Recent data shows that children's experiences vary widely. Of the 46,000 foster children adopted in 1999, half waited less than one year for adoption after their birth parents' rights were terminated, and nearly half waited a year or more. Six percent waited three to four years.[14]

| <u>Months Between TPR & Adoption</u> | <u>Percent of Children</u> |
|--|----------------------------|
| <1 month | 3% |
| 1 – 5 months | 18% |
| 6 – 11 months | 30% |
| 12 – 17 months | 19% |
| 18 – 23 months | 11% |
| 24 – 29 months | 6% |
| 30 – 35 months | 4% |
| 3 – 4 years | 6% |
| 5 + years | <1% |

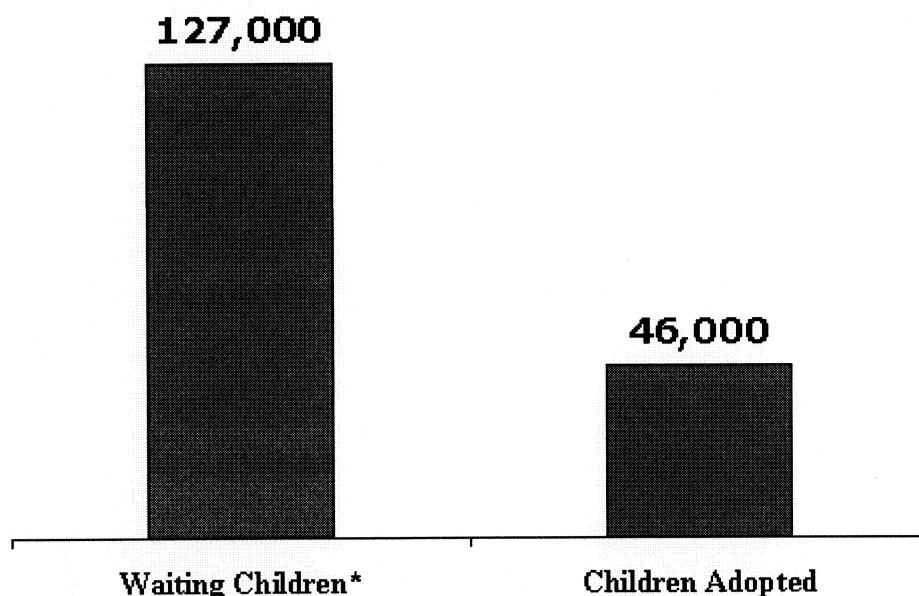
Many Children Spend Years in Foster Care

Almost 70 percent of the children waiting to be adopted had been in continuous foster care for two years or more; twenty-five percent for five years or more.[15]

| <u>Months in Continuous Foster Care</u> | <u>Percent of Children</u> |
|---|----------------------------|
| <1 month | 1% |
| 1 – 5 months | 4% |
| 6 – 11 months | 7% |
| 12 – 17 months | 9% |
| 18 – 23 months | 10% |
| 24 – 29 months | 10% |
| 30 – 35 months | 9% |
| 36 – 59 months | 24% |
| 60 or more months | 25% |

Many More Adoptive Homes Needed

Even with the recent increases in adoptions from foster care, the number of children waiting for adoption on September 30, 1999 was more than two-and-a-half times the number of children adopted during that year.[16]

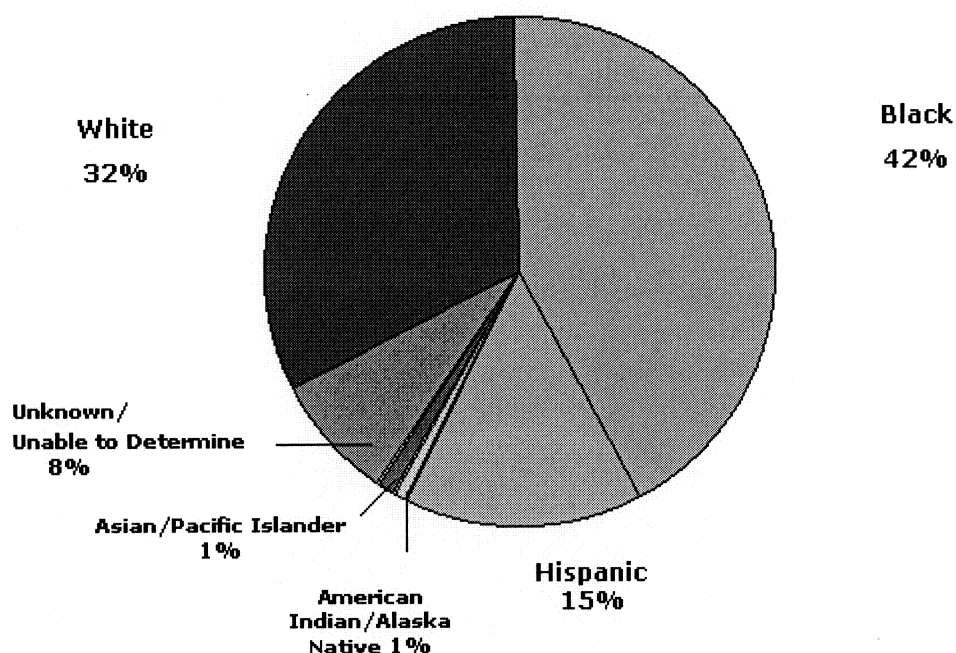


* The term "waiting children" is used by AFCARS to designate children who have a goal of adoption, and/or whose birth parents' rights have been terminated.

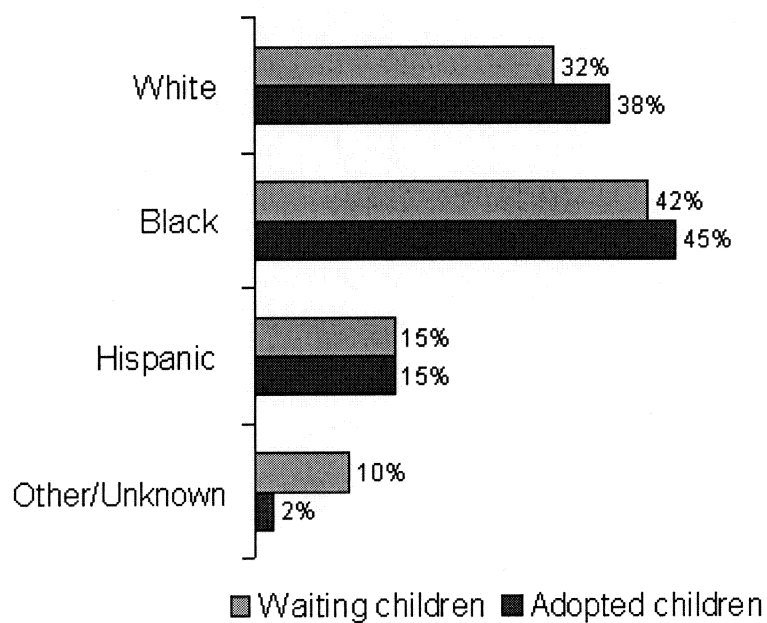
Illinois and New York Top List of States With the Most Waiting Children in 1998 and 1999^[17]

| Top 10 States with the Most Waiting Children | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1998 | | | | 1999 | | | |
| State | Waiting Children | Foster Care Population | Percentage Waiting | State | Waiting Children | Foster Care Population | Percentage Waiting |
| Illinois | 23,023 | 48,737 | 47% | New York | 14,882 | 52,672 | 28% |
| New York | 17,818 | 53,555 | 33% | Illinois | 13,909 | 40,270 | 35% |
| Texas | 8,017 | 17,103 | 47% | California | 9,894 | 117,937 | 8% |
| Pennsylvania | 4,768 | 23,070 | 21% | Texas | 8,734 | 19,880 | 44% |
| California | 4,455 | 112,767 | 4% | Pennsylvania | 4,891 | 22,690 | 22% |
| N. Carolina | 4,298 | 11,314 | 38% | Florida | 4,610 | 34,292 | 13% |
| Florida | 4,203 | 26,320 | 16% | New Jersey | 4,427 | 9,494 | 47% |
| Washington | 4,131 | 8,872 | 47% | N. Carolina | 3,603 | 11,339 | 32% |
| New Jersey | 3,908 | 9,182 | 43% | Ohio | 3,476 | 20,078 | 17% |
| Missouri | 2,459 | 12,495 | 20% | Massachusetts | 3,278 | 11,169 | 29% |

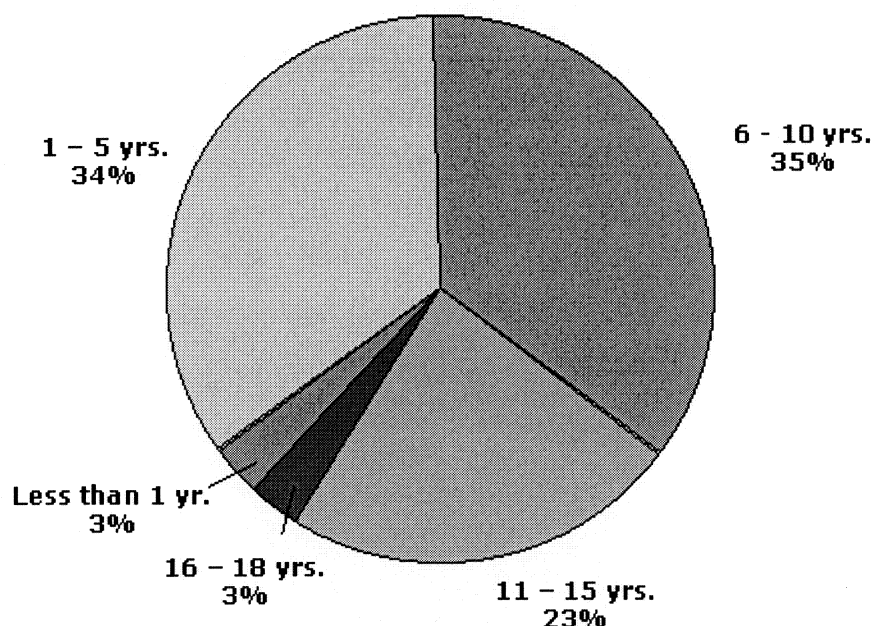
Almost 60 Percent of Waiting Children Are Black or Hispanic^[18]



The Percentages of White and Black Children Adopted from Foster Care Are Greater than the Respective Percentages of Those Waiting^[19]

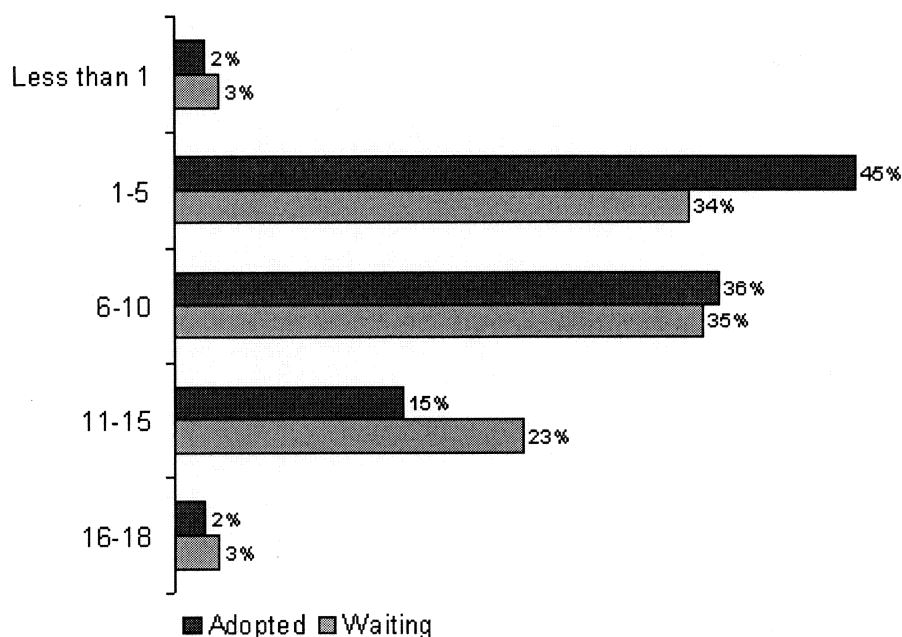


60 Percent of Children in Foster Care Waiting for Adoptive Families Are 6 Years of Age or Older^[20]



Preschoolers Are More Likely to be Adopted Than Older Children

A disproportionate number of children age 1-5 are adopted--they comprise 45 percent of the children adopted from foster care, but 34 percent of waiting children. A similar marked difference can be found in the over-10 age group, which represents 17 percent of the children adopted from foster care, but 26 percent of the waiting foster children.[21] Researchers estimate that at 8 or 9 years of age, a child's likelihood of remaining in foster care becomes higher than the probability they will be adopted.[22]



Special Needs Require Specialized Services

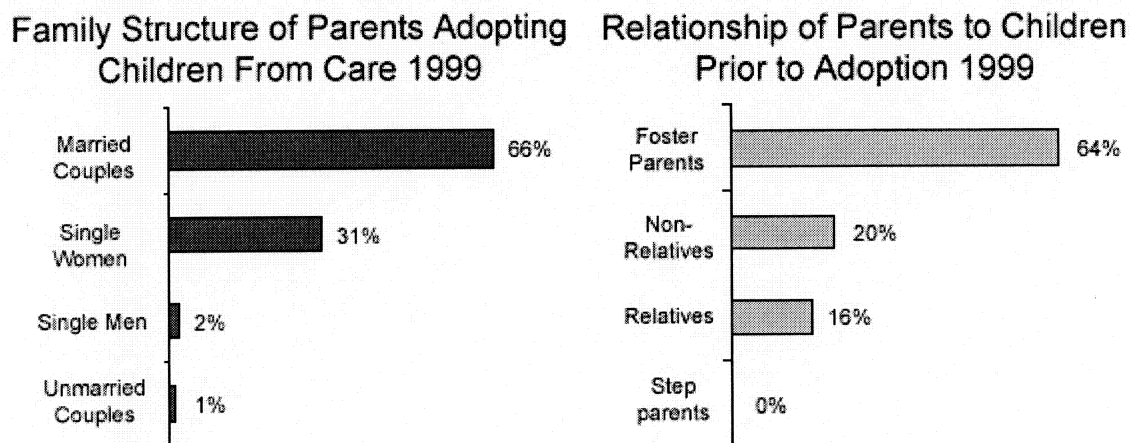
Many of the children in foster care have physical and/or psychological problems as a result of experiences including pre-natal exposure to alcohol or drugs, neglect and/or abuse, and multiple foster care placements. Thirty

to forty percent of children in the child welfare system have physical health problems.[23] Although experts disagree on the number of kids with significant psychiatric and behavioral disorders, a high prevalence has been documented:

- The Child Welfare League of America reports, "Approximately 60 percent of all children in out-of-home care have moderate to severe mental health problems [...] Adolescents living with foster parents or in group homes have about four times the rate of serious psychiatric disorders than those living with their own families." [24]
- A 2000 Department of Health and Human Services report found that foster children are more likely than other groups of Medicaid children to use mental health services. In California and Pennsylvania, 16 percent and 21 percent of children in foster care respectively use psychiatric services, as compared with 2 percent and 5 percent of other Medicaid-eligible children. [25]
- A 2001 study found that foster care children were more likely to have a mental health or substance abuse condition than other children receiving Medicaid. [26]

These children need specialized medical and psychological services before and after adoption. But according to a 1995 federal study, 12 percent of young foster children receive no routine health care, 34 percent receive no immunizations, and 32 percent have unmet health needs. [27] And less than one-third of children in the child welfare system are receiving mental health services. [28]

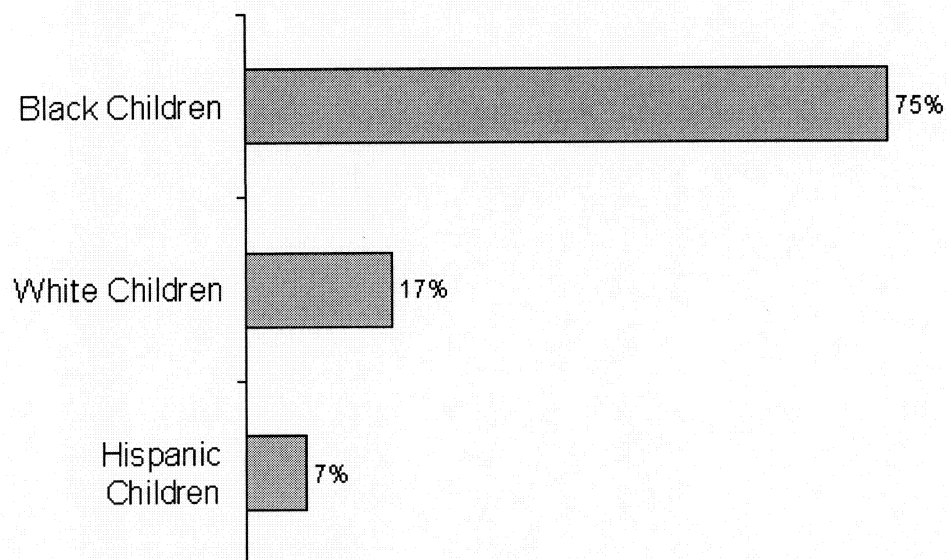
Foster Parents and Married Couples Predominate Among Foster Care Adopters



Single women and foster parents -- previously barred from adopting - represent significant numbers of current adopters. [29]

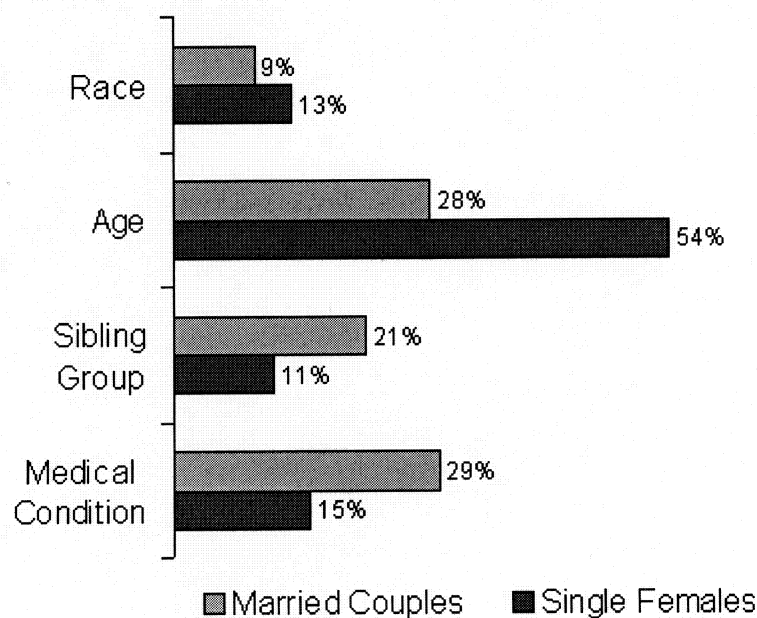
Over Eighty Percent of Unrelated Foster Children Adopted by Single Women Are Black or Hispanic [30]

Race of Adopted Children by Unrelated Single Women



Minority and Older Children Are More Likely to be Adopted by Single Women than by Married Couples

Sibling groups and children with disabilities are more likely to be adopted by married couples than by single women.[31]



Sources and References

[Most of the cited data is from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), which collects case level data from the state child welfare agencies and prepares aggregate reports. AFCARS documents the number of children in foster

care and their status on the last day of each fiscal year; AFCARS also reports the number and characteristics of foster children adopted throughout the year.

AFCARS Report 6, which details FY 1999 data, is the most recent and comprehensive data source available. It is available at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/afcars/june2001.htm>.]

[All years reported here are federal fiscal years, from October 1 to September 30.]

[1] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, AFCARS REPORT 6, at 1 (June 2001).

[2] [AFCARS defines "waiting children" as those who have a case goal of adoption and/or whose birth parents' rights have been terminated. The estimate does not include children 16 and older whose parents' rights have been terminated and who have a case goal of emancipation.] AFCARS REPORT 6, at 3.

[3] AFCARS REPORT 5, at 1 (April 2001); AFCARS, ALERT: REVISED FOSTER CARE ESTIMATES (May 2002), available at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/dis/afcars/cwstats.html>.

[4] AFCARS REPORT 5, at 1 (April 2001).

[5] AFCARS, ALERT: REVISED FOSTER CARE ESTIMATES (May 2002), available at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/dis/afcars/cwstats.html>.

[6] AFCARS REPORT 6, at 7, 3, 4.

[7] Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, P.L. 105-89, pdf available at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=105_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ89.105.pdf.

[8] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, HHS Awards Adoption Bonuses, HHS NEWS (Sept.10, 2001), available at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/press/2001/adoption.html>; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, Adoptions of Children with Public Child Welfare Agency Involvement By State: FY 1995-FY 1999 (revised May 18, 2001), available at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/dis/adoptchild.htm>.

[9] Maza, Penelope L., at 1, 3, "The Age Factor in Adoption," THE ROUNDTABLE: JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR SPECIAL NEEDS ADOPTION, 16, 1 (2001).

[10] [The baseline number is the highest yearly adoption total from the years 1997, 1998 and 1999. Adoption totals are preliminary and are subject to change.] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, HHS Awards Adoption Bonuses, HHS NEWS (Sept.10, 2001), available at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/press/2001/adoption.html>.

[11] Adapted from the North American Council on Adoptable Children's (NACAC) ADOPTALK (Spring 2002), <http://www.nacac.org/adoptalk.html>. Source, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as reported to NACAC (March 2002).

[12] [The baseline number is the highest yearly adoption total from the years 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000. Adoption totals are preliminary and are subject to change.]

[13] Adapted from the North American Council on Adoptable Children's (NACAC) ADOPTALK (Spring 2002), <http://www.nacac.org/adoptalk.html>. Source, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as reported to NACAC (March 2002).

[14] AFCARS REPORT 6, at 6, 7.

[15] AFCARS REPORT 6, at 5.

[16] AFCARS REPORT 6, at 4, 6.

[17][Ten states did not provide waiting children numbers for 1998 - Alaska, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, South Dakota and Tennessee; three states did not provide them for 1999 - Alaska, Michigan and Nevada]. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, "State Outcomes Data," CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES 1999, at Section IV, available at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/dis/tables/index.htm>.

[18] AFCARS REPORT 6, at 3.

[19] AFCARS REPORT 6, at 5, 6.

[20] AFCARS REPORT 6, at 5.

[22] AFCARS REPORT 6, at 3, 5.

[23] Maza, Penelope L., at 1, "The Age Factor in Adoption," THE ROUNDTABLE: JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR SPECIAL NEEDS ADOPTION, 16, 1 (2001).

[24] Child Welfare League of America, FACTSHEET: THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE, available at <http://www.cwla.org/programs/health/healthcarecwfact.htm>

[25] Child Welfare League of America, FACTSHEET: THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE, (available at <http://www.cwla.org/programs/health/healthcarecwfact.htm>)

[26] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, HEALTH CONDITIONS, UTILIZATION AND EXPENDITURES OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE, at 50, Table III.10 (Sept. 2000).

[27] Rosenbach, Margo, Children in Foster Care: Challenges in Meeting Their Health Care Needs Through Medicaid, at 5, MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH (March 2001), available at <http://www.casey.org/cnc/documents/7foster.pdf>.

[28] FOSTER CARE: HEALTH NEEDS OF MANY YOUNG CHILDREN ARE UNKNOWN AND UNMET, at 2, General Accounting Office, GAO-HEHS-95-114 (May 1995), available at <http://www.gao.gov/>.

[29] Child Welfare League of America, FACTSHEET: THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE, available at <http://www.cwla.org/programs/health/healthcarecwfact.htm>.

[30] AFCARS REPORT 6, at 5.

[31] Maza, Penelope, The Latest from AFCARS on Adoptions and Waiting Children, at 23, Presented at THE CHILDREN'S BUREAU SIXTH NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE CONFERENCE (March 2000).

[32] [This data excludes foster children adopted by relatives.] Maza, Penelope, The Latest from AFCARS on Adoptions and Waiting Children, at 26, Presented at THE CHILDREN'S BUREAU SIXTH NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE CONFERENCE (March 2000).